

Two local students are finalists for national Physics, Chemistry teams

Alachua County Public Schools and Buchholz High School could have two outstanding science students competing on an international stage this summer.

Junior William Guan and freshman Jimmy Jiang are each among just 20 students nationwide still in the running to be on the U.S. teams that will go head-to-head with the best science students from around the world this summer.

Guan is a finalist for the 2023 U.S. Physics Team, which will compete in the International Physics Olympiad in Tokyo, Japan in mid-July. He earned his spot with outstanding scores on a series of challenging physics exams.



As one of the top 20 performers on the USA Physics Olympiad exam, Guan will be heading to the University of Maryland in June for the U.S. Physics Team Training Camp, where he and his fellow finalists will receive intensive preparation and take a series of selection tests. The top five students and an alternative will then be selected for the U.S. team.

Jiang's path to finalist status for the U.S. Chemistry Team was similar to Guan's. He too had to make top scores on a series of rigorous preliminary exams. Although he's only in 9th grade, he earned one of the top-20 scores on the National Chemistry Olympiad Exam. That qualified him to attend a two-week Study Camp at University of Maryland College Park in June that will determine which four students go on to represent the U.S. in the International Chemistry Olympiad in Zurich, Switzerland in July.

Guan says he's surprised he's made it this far in the competition. He's looking forward to spending time at the camp with people who have an interest in physics, a subject that's fascinated him since he was a child.

"It answers a lot of the basic 'why' questions, like 'Why is the sky blue?'" he said. "Those are explained by physics, which is why I really like it."

"Will is a student that any teacher would love to have," said Marc Moody, Guan's Advanced Placement (AP) Physics teacher. "He has taken a shine to physics and math, but with his mind he could become great at any discipline so long as it fascinates him."

Like Guan, Jiang was surprised by his success this year, especially since he's just a freshman. His interest in chemistry was sparked more recently.

"I took an honors chem class here at Buchholz when I was in 8th grade, and I really enjoyed it," he said. "So I started looking deeper and deeper into the field of chemistry, and I found it really interesting."

"Jimmy has been an exceptional student in my class," said Alex Payne, his teacher for AP Chemistry. "He's dedicated an immense amount of time outside the classroom to prepare for the Olympiad Exams. I look forward to seeing Jimmy compete this summer and for the next three years."

####